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Women, children benefit from program to promote identity cards, birth certificates
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Amaal Hassan Kamel has not existed officially for most of her life. The 49-year-old housewife didn't receive a birth certificate or identity card until two months ago. Like millions of Egyptian women and children, she lived in the bureaucratic shadows, unable to apply for a decent job or to request travel documents.

"My parents were very poor, and they never cared about educating or registering me," she told The Times. The mother of 8-year-old triplets said she couldn't enroll them in school "because I did not have the documents needed for applying."

Kamel now has her documents and her children started school in September. She was one of about 3 million unregistered women and children in Egypt who were aided in a project run by the nation's Ministry of Family and Population and its National Council for Childhood and Motherhood. The program aims to raise awareness among undocumented citizens as a way to fight the country's persistent poverty.

Kamel wasn't spurred to act until "people from the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood came to us and talked to me about how essential it was to get my own birth certificate in order to secure my kids' education."

In Egypt, the blue-stamped identity cards are needed for most modern activities. Lack of them is most common among women and children in rural areas and shantytowns, where most women are illiterate housewives whose husbands either oppose or are not aware of their spouses' right to have their own identity cards.

Zena Spinelli, a communications consultant at the Ministry of Family, said that awareness was the first step in reversing the problem: "We started going to homes and talking to women and their husbands in rural areas and poor neighborhoods," Spinelli said, "about the importance of having official documents for themselves and for their children as well."

"Sometimes, it was not easy for poor people to understand the real need for being registered, and that was the toughest part, but the program is paying dividends after three years of hard work."

Implemented in seven governorates across the country, the project has so far led to the issuing of 66,531 identity cards, 45,634 birth certificates and 16,842 documents for unregistered individuals.

To read the original article, please [click here](#).

For more information, please contact Anjali Reddy at 202-777-3508 or areddy@clsdc.com.

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